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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2019
TAGS: [AORC](#) [KNNP](#) [TRGY](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: USG ACCEPTS EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL FOR CIVIL NUCLEAR
COOPERATION WORKING GROUP MEETING

REF: 09 STATE 055370

Classified By: NEA DAS MAURA CONNELLY, REASONS: 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (U) This is an action request - see paragraph 6.

12. (C) SUMMARY: On September 10, Egypt invited USG civil nuclear experts to Cairo for discussions on cooperation related to civil nuclear infrastructure. Department has decided to respond positively to this proposal in order to rebuild trust on nuclear-related issues and to promote much-needed Egyptian goodwill leading up to the May 2010 NPT Review Conference. END SUMMARY.

13. (U) BACKGROUND: The United States and Egypt have a long history of civil nuclear cooperation. In addition to the formal nuclear cooperation agreement (123 Agreement) dating to 1981, our governments had a Joint Standing Committee on Nuclear Energy Cooperation (JSCNEC) that met on a regular basis in the mid-1980's to discuss nuclear energy policy and to coordinate areas of technical cooperation. Meeting of the committee lapsed as Egyptian interest in nuclear energy waned, post-Chernobyl. However, in November 2006, the GOE officially announced its intention to establish nuclear power by 2020.

14. (SBU) Following a June 2008 visit to Cairo by former Special Envoy Jackie Wolcott, the GOE transmitted in February 2009 a proposal for renewed civil nuclear cooperation. This proposal identified specific areas of bilateral technical cooperation and suggested reactivation of the JSCNEC as a mechanism to manage future cooperation in this area. In April 2009, the USG transmitted a response to this request, in which we welcomed re-establishment of the JSCNEC and proposed an interagency U.S. delegation visit Cairo to explore specific areas of potential cooperation (reftel). Egypt transmitted its favorable response to this on September 10, recommending a meeting in Cairo in November 2009 to commence civil nuclear cooperation.

15. (C) Moving forward with this civil nuclear cooperation would allow us to broaden the dialogue on nuclear-related issues and build upon a still-fragile basis of trust on civil nuclear cooperation. In these initial interactions, it will be important to demonstrate that we are not making our cooperation contingent upon Egyptian support for our broader nonproliferation objectives. Nonetheless, constructive engagement with Egypt on civil nuclear issues may help to enlist its critical support during the 2010 NPT Review Conference. For these reasons, Department has decided to respond favorably to the request for expert-level consultations in Cairo. END BACKGROUND.

16. (U) ACTION REQUEST: Post is requested to transmit the letter in paragraph 7 below, signed by Ambassador Scobey, to Dr. Khalil Yasso, First Undersecretary of State of the Egyptian Ministry of Electricity and Energy. Post is requested to insert the name of the appropriate Embassy point of contact in paragraph three of the letter.

17. (SBU) BEGIN TEXT OF LETTER:

Appropriate salutation.

Thank you very much for your letter dated September 10th indicating your support for technical cooperation in the area of civil nuclear infrastructure development. The United States fully supports your goal of developing civilian nuclear power, and we are committed to cooperation in the development of nuclear power infrastructure for the safe, secure, and well-safeguarded operation of nuclear power plants in Egypt.

Your letter included an invitation to U.S. nuclear energy experts to meet with their Egyptian counterparts in Cairo to discuss prospects for bilateral cooperation in this field, including the re-establishment of the Joint Standing Committee on Nuclear Energy Cooperation (JSCNEC). We are pleased to respond favorably to this request. A team of U.S. experts from the Departments of State and Energy, the National Nuclear Security Administration, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is being formed to travel to Cairo for this purpose.

Unfortunately, due to scheduling constraints, your proposed dates of mid-November will not be possible. Instead, we propose a meeting in mid-January 2010. I encourage you to consider this possibility and request that you contact ((NAME)) of my staff to determine what dates would be convenient for both sides.

We look forward to working closely with you and your government to rejuvenate bilateral, technical cooperation in this important sector.

Appropriate closing.

END LETTER TEXT.

18. (U) Department thanks post for its assistance with this matter. Department point of contact is Marc Humphrey (ISN/NESS).
CLINTON